

**A SALARIED MAN**

By SARAH WHITING.

"Hang prudence!" Jack Manners cried impulsively. "I'd rather half starve with Elsie than feast without her."

"How about whole starving?" Louise, his cousin, asked provokingly. "Sure it may not come to that?"

"Which means, being interpreted, you hate Elsie Denton," Jack retorted, his mouth settling doggedly.

Louise looked at him reproachfully. "I deserve that for the folly of thinking you would not misunderstand me," she said. "I have nothing against your sweetheart except that I have nothing for her. Like all the Denton girls, she has been brought up with an eye single to husband-catching rather than husband-serving."

"Good afternoon! I won't stay to hear her slanderously dissected!" Jack burst out. "Not even by the woman to whom I owe my education. Don't be uneasy—I'll pay you every dollar. Elsie will help me. She is already planning how we shall save and thrive."

"You owe me no money, but I think courtesy is due the blood—our blood," she interrupted. "You have been like my brother—my dear younger brother—for whom I had such hopes," she went on, steadily. "Be halfway sensible, Jack—for the blood's sake. Wait until you have your profession, at least."

"I shall get it, never fear," Jack said hotly, "but not at your expense. I'm deep enough in your debt already."

"Let that pass, please," Louise said, her eyes growing steely. "Tell me exactly what your plans are."

"I'm going into Blaney's office to study," he replied defiantly.

With this, Jack rushed away to Elsie. Sore and bruised from the conflict with his cousin, he sought comfort and reassurance. It hurt him to find her on the verge of tears, surveying his ring with a petulant frown. It had been his mother's engagement ring and was set with a small diamond of fine luster. He prized it so dearly he had thought she must do likewise.

"May Cutter ran in to show me her ring," Elsie said petulantly. "Such a beauty—a blue-white solitaire. She says it cost a thousand—and Job Means is going to give her a string of pearls when they marry. It made me so ashamed I hid my ring-hand first—but she saw it. So I had to tell her I was wearing this just until you had time to run up to the city and get me a real ring set in a special design."

"What an unprincipled little fibber!" Jack said fondly, with yet an unaccountable sinking of the heart.

"Don't you think, Jack, it would be better if you got me the real ring? I know your cousin has a charge account at Letfield's."

"But I'd starve before I added anything to it," Jack burst out.

At this she tossed her head, saying with a pout, "Why, she's bound to give us a handsome present—for her own credit's sake! Just do as I say, and tell her that settles it. I simply won't let May Cutter put it all over me as she does."

"Let me tell you a few things," Jack said, paling to the lips. As briefly and as baldly as possible he told her of his cousin's attitude, of his own hopes, plans, even fears. "I know it's going to be hard—an awful pull, girly," he wound up; "but—we'll face it together. Isn't that better than being apart?"

Elsie was sobbing. She had never dreamed of a situation like this. Her plan had been to marry—and go straight home to the Manners house, the handsomest in town. Jack was the heir presumptive—he had grown up there. Miss Louise was, so fond of him she could never do without him.

"You say she'll do something for us? How much do you suppose? We could manage fairly on \$3,000 a year besides what you make," she ventured doubtfully.

Jack laughed contemptuously. "I suppose she will furnish the kitchen for us and give us half a dozen teaspoons," he said. "But \$3,000 a year! Why, I couldn't bring myself to take it if she offered it, I owe her too much already."

"You are wickedly foolish," Elsie sobbed. "And unkind, too. If you had told me in time I shouldn't be in this awful hole. Of course I can't marry you as things are. I have no taste or talent for starvation. Suppose we wait a year or two. Maybe I can bring her around. If that turns out to be impossible; well, we shall see. I simply can't stay here forever. Mother has three other girls younger than I am, remember; and father will never be anything but a salaried man."

"Suppose I'm never anything but that?" Jack asked abruptly, something dogged creeping into his face.

Elsie flushed and returned sharply: "If you are going to let yourself be so—why, the sooner I get rid of this trumpery the better!"

With that she dropped the ring at his feet. He picked it up and left her without a word.

He thought his heart was broken. Time healed it and his fortunes mended. He did not marry for ten years.

Kilnor More, the girl of his mature choice, was worth the long waiting. (Copyright, 1915, by the McClure Newspaper Syndicate.)

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